



Public Document Pack Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Agenda

Scrutiny making a positive difference: Member led and independent, Overview & Scrutiny Committee promote service improvements, influence policy development & hold Executive to account for the benefit of the Community of Dacorum

Wednesday 12 October 2016 at 7.30 pm

DBC Bulbourne Room - Civic Centre

The Councillors listed below are requested to attend the above meeting, on the day and at the time and place stated, to consider the business set out in this agenda.

Membership

Councillor Mahmood (Chairman)
Councillor Gbola Adeleke
Councillor Banks
Councillor Mrs Bassadone
Councillor Conway
Councillor P Hearn

Councillor Link
Councillor Fethney
Councillor Imarni (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Silwal
Councillor Timmis
Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe

Co-Opted Members:
Cook, Horn and Howard

Substitute Members:
Councillors Howard, D Collins, Clark, Ransley and Tindall

For further information, please contact

AGENDA

1. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes from the previous meeting

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest

A member with a disclosable pecuniary interest or a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered -

- (i) must disclose the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent

and, if the interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest, or a personal interest which is also prejudicial

- (ii) may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter (and must withdraw to the public seating area) unless they have been granted a dispensation.

A member who discloses at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary interest which is not registered in the Members' Register of Interests, or is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the disclosure.

Disclosable pecuniary interests, personal and prejudicial interests are defined in Part 2 of the Code of Conduct For Members

[If a member is in any doubt as to whether they have an interest which should be declared they should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer before the start of the meeting]

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

An opportunity for members of the public to make statements or ask questions in accordance with the rules as to public participation

5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN

6. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW (Pages 3 - 24)

7. DEN'S PERFORMANCE (Pages 25 - 32)



AGENDA ITEM: 6

SUMMARY

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Report for:	<u>Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u>
Date of meeting:	12 October 2016
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Preventing and Tackling Homelessness – Dacorum Borough Council Homelessness strategy 2016-2020
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing Natasha Brathwaite – Strategic Housing Group Manager
Purpose of report:	The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with an overview of the proposed Homelessness strategy 2016 - 2020. This includes the approach taken to develop the strategy and an update on national and local trends, key changes in legislation and the council’s commitment to achieving a Gold Standard homelessness service.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 For members to review the proposed strategy and offer further feedback ahead of presentation to Cabinet for final approval 2 For members to note the implications of the outlined challenges and trends impacting Dacorum’s response to preventing and tackling homelessness, particularly the demands on the councils homelessness service. 3 For members to consider their role in monitoring the performance of the homelessness service by receiving an annual report against the five commitments set out in the strategy.
Corporate objectives:	<p>Preventing and tackling homelessness contributes to the follow corporate objectives;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clean, safe and enjoyable environment • Building strong and vibrant communities • Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need
Implications:	<u>Financial implication</u>

	<p>Proposals have been made in preparation for 2017/18 budget review, to support recommendations made to further improve the service delivered to customers. These proposals will be subject to the Chief Officer Group assessment and considered through the usual annual budget review process.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>It is important that we deliver value for money for local people accessing our homelessness support services. Increased demand requires us to explore new ways to improve efficiency within our housing advice and options service so we can target resources to improve service quality, enhance effectiveness and deliver positive outcomes for our clients. We are also committed to 'demonstrating the cost effectiveness of preventing homelessness'. By investing in preventative approaches we can support people to stay in existing accommodation</p>
Risk Implications	Housing Risk Assessment is presented to the committee on a quarterly basis
Equalities Implications	Community Impact Assessment carried out – see appendix 2
Health And Safety Implications	There are no direct Health and Safety implications from the strategy.
Consultees:	<p>Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Mark Gaynor – Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration</p> <p>Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Julie Still – Group Manager Residents Services</p> <p>Cynthia Hayford – Strategic Housing Team Leader</p> <p>Emily-Rae Maxwell – Policy & Participation Team Leader</p> <p>Homelessness Forum partners</p>
Background papers:	<p>The Housing Allocations Policy</p> <p>Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018</p> <p>Localism Act 2011</p> <p>The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011)</p> <p>The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012</p>

<p>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</p>	<p>H&C OSC – Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>NPSS – National Practitioner Support Service</p> <p>AST – Assured Shorthold Tenancy</p> <p>LHA – Local Housing Allowance</p> <p>MARAC – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Consultation</p>

1 Background

- 1.1 Each local housing authority is required to consider housing needs within its area; this includes the needs of homeless households, to whom local authorities have a statutory duty to provide assistance. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities must have a strategy for preventing homelessness in their district. The strategy must apply to everyone at risk of homelessness, not just people who may fall within a priority need group for the purposes of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Authorities are also encouraged to take steps to relieve homelessness in cases where someone has been found to be homeless but is not owed a duty to secure accommodation under the homelessness legislation.
- 1.2 In March 2016 Dacorum Borough Councils homelessness service successfully passed a peer assessment conducted by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS).
- 1.3 Following this, the council has committed to achieving a Gold Standard homelessness service by completing ten local challenges set out by the NPSS. By completing these challenges along with recommendations captured from the peer assessment the service can embed more efficient and modern practices for preventing and tackling homelessness.
- 1.4 To support the achievement of the NPSS gold standard service, the council took the decision to replace the previous Homelessness strategy 2013 -2018 and develop a new one that considers the increasing demand for the service, potential changes in legislation and the requirements set out by the NPSS.
- 1.5 This report will outline the key changes within the proposed strategy and the approach taken to develop it.
- 1.6 The report will also provide members with an overview of current challenges within the service, national and local trends regarding homelessness and how analysing these issues have influenced the proposed strategy.

2 Proposed strategy for preventing and tackling homelessness 2016-2020

- 2.1 The vision for the proposed Homelessness strategy 2016 – 2020 (see appendix 1) is to create a borough where homelessness is not an option.
- 2.2 The strategy sets out five outcome based commitments for our homelessness service. These were developed in consultation with our partners and consider the recommendations from the NPSS.
- 2.3 Commitment one is to continue to build partnerships across different sectors and lead Dacorum's response to preventing and tackling homelessness. The key areas within this commitment require the service to;

- Increase effectiveness of the Homeless Forum by engaging with partners and ensuring there is a collective approach to achieving the commitments set out within this strategy.
- Improve partnership working to ensure that the Strategic Housing Service influence services commissioned within the borough to maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness
- Ensure that we are the single gateway for homelessness in Dacorum and prevent clients from slipping through the net and for agencies to effectively manage resources to tackle key issues.

2.4 Through commitment two we will work together with partners and residents to understand the causes of homelessness and increase the help Dacorum services can offer, this includes;

- Making effective use of our data and sharing data across the council to profile our clients and to map available services against any identified trends
- Working closely with our Residents Services team, the Police and voluntary sector partners, to further develop our No Second Night Out model and Housing First Model
- Utilising our management systems and data sharing to enable us to identify potential victims of Domestic Abuse earlier and implement appropriate interventions preventing further risk or homelessness.

2.5 By achieving commitment three we will improve access, security and stability within the private rented sector and help Dacorum residents to remain in their homes. Key areas within this commitment are;

- Using channel shift to improve access to detailed housing advice, via alternative options such as skype
- Developing our Help to Rent scheme and promote the increased benefits to landlords enabling more people to access the private rented housing
- Increasing the support offered for mortgage repossession prevention

2.6 In commitment four the strategy outlines how we will empower Dacorum residents to make informed decisions about their housing options. This includes;

- Improving communications with residents to manage expectations for social housing
- Developing the Council's Enhanced Housing Options toolkit and increasing the information that is available by local and national agencies to enable our clients to self-serve and obtain housing advice 24 hours/7 days per week.

- 2.7 Commitment five seeks to reduce the affect of homelessness on young people and families by;
- Increasing our offer of respite accommodation and mediation services to reduce breakdown in family relationships
 - Reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people and families with young children
- 2.8 Ensuring there is a multi-agency commitment to delivering this strategy the five commitments will be monitored by the Homelessness Forum and supported by the Housing Service and Strategic Housing Team plans.
- 2.9 It is also proposed that an annual progress report is submitted for the HCOSC to review.

3 Developing the strategy

- 3.1 A key factor when developing this strategy was the ten local challenges set out by the NPSS. The local challenges are considered best practice for delivering homelessness services and in order to achieve a Gold Standard service, the council is required to demonstrate a strategic commitment to the ten challenges.
- 3.2 By achieving the NPSS gold standard programme for homelessness we will; improve our response to homelessness, identify opportunities that prevent Dacorum residents from becoming homeless and work with our partners to intervene at the earliest possible point. (For a full list of the challenges see appendix 1 – page 6).
- 3.3 The Homeless Forum consists of representatives from local statutory services and the voluntary and community sector. Members of the forum were consulted with throughout developments of the strategy and had a significant role in developing the five commitments. Once approved by the HCOSC and Cabinet, these organisations will be asked to formally sign up to the strategy enabling a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling homelessness.

4 National and local trends

- 4.1 In addition to the NPSS requirements, significant changes nationally and local trends regarding the demand for homelessness have influenced the development of this strategy. Themes within the strategy include; the private sector, supporting young people, addressing rough sleeping and domestic abuse. This is based on the evidence outlined in the following section of this report. By providing this evidence, the intention is to inform members of the current challenges impacting the service and provide context for the commitments set out within the Homelessness strategy 2016 – 2020
- 4.2 According to Government statistics, homelessness rose from 1,768 to 2,744 between 2010 - 2014. The rise means rough sleeping in England has risen by more than half during this period. This is reflective of local trends; homelessness has been steadily increasing in Dacorum over the last two years and is projected to continue increasing. There are a number of contributing factors to the increase in homelessness and risk of homelessness.

- 4.3 Rising property prices within the private rented sector have seen an increase in households being rendered homeless due to termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) the standard form of tenancy used in the private sector. This is currently the most common cause of people presenting themselves as homeless.
- 4.4 Private rented properties are becoming less affordable due to landlords letting their properties on the open market, at a significantly higher value than set at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level. For example, a 2 bedroom property LHA rate is £853.49 per month; however 2 bedroom properties can be let via the private market for as much as £1000 per month. In 2009 and 2015 this reason for homelessness accounted for 11% and 50% respectively of all homeless duties awarded by the council.
- 4.5 This has contributed to an increase in demand for Housing Advice & Options service and in 2016 a total number of 366 homeless applications, of which 200 applications were accepted a full duty and termination of AST's accounted for 45% of acceptances.
- 4.6 This trend has continued so far into 2016/17 with a total of 123 applications (as at 31 August 2016) and 74 acceptances, of which termination of AST's accounted for 46% of acceptances.
- 4.7 There is increase demand to source affordable private sector accommodation. The Council currently has 141 tenancies via our Help to Rent scheme. This scheme works with landlords in the private sector to utilise their properties and enable people actively bidding on the housing register to access private sector properties.
- 4.8 It is becoming increasingly difficult to encourage new landlords to sign up to the Help to Rent scheme. This is due to improved benefits being offered within the local High Street Letting agent market, a local Registered Provider has also implemented a Private Sector Leasing Scheme with full management, guaranteed rent, repairs up to the value of £300 with no management costs.
- 4.9 Additionally other local authorities are offering high value financial incentives than those offered by the council, to attract landlords within Dacorum to enable them to place applicants in affordable housing outside of their local area. The impact of the proposed freezing of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) until 2020 will continue to enable other local authorities to access the private housing sector within Dacorum.
- 4.10 This has a significant impact on our service and reduces the opportunities available to us to grow the scheme and prevent homelessness, which in turn increases demand on temporary accommodation and discharge of duty into social housing.
- 4.11 Implications of this increase in demand could lead to the following;
- A further reduction in the availability of affordable housing within the borough;
 - Increased risk of people living in poor housing conditions e.g. overcrowding;
 - A negative impact on the economic investment within the borough due to high house prices;
 - And a direct impact on the Council's General Fund ability to fulfil its statutory duty due to limited resources

- 4.12 In addition to trends within the private sector accounting for homelessness within Dacorum, the services must consider how it will address the needs of young people that are experiencing homelessness or at risk.
- 4.13 A July 2015 article, commissioned by Homelessness charity Crisis, warns. *“We are particularly worried about cuts to housing benefit for 18-21s. Under-25s already make up a third of homeless people and there is a real danger these changes could make things even worse.”* Nationally, it is estimated 83,000 homeless young people have had to rely on councils and charities to provide a roof over their head in the past year. This is over three times the 26,852 young people recorded in homeless figures released by the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 4.14 This view is echoed by that of our statutory and voluntary partners across Hertfordshire and has featured as a top strategic issue for discussion at the Homelessness Forum. All partners reported increases in the numbers of young people that are homeless and there for service demands.
- 4.15 Alongside the increase in young people presenting as homeless, the number of rough sleepers across both Dacorum and Countywide has increased.
- 4.16 In the 2014 the council identified 7 known rough sleepers within the borough. Through our close work with partners evidence has shown that this number was thought to be as high as 30.
- 4.17 As a result of the increase DBC undertook a formal homeless count for the first time on 26 November 2015; this was supported by Homeless Link, DENS and other statutory and voluntary partners.
- 4.18 The council continued to gather further evidence regarding rough sleeping, and the above figures have ranged between 4-15 rough sleepers on any given night.
- 4.19 The service has also seen an increase in clients seeking housing advice or making a homelessness application as a result of Domestic abuse.
- 4.20 The council has seen an increase in homelessness as a result of Domestic Abuse as in 2014/15 homelessness acceptances were below 10%, however in 2015/16 and 2016/17 this has increased to 15% and 17% respectively.
- 4.21 Close work with the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Consultation Panel (MARAC) and our Resident Services team suggest this is likely to be as a result of heightened awareness of Domestic Abuse issues, increased staff training, which enables earlier detection of the signs of abuse and more joined up working between agencies.
- 4.22 There is a distinct correlation in the casework conducted by the housing service households presenting with issues, such as financial difficulty and poor physical and mental health and Domestic Abuse.
- 4.23 Domestic Abuse is the second most common reason for homelessness within Dacorum after Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy and ahead of parental evictions.

5 Current and Pending Legislation

- 5.1 The proposed strategy highlights the importance of understanding how changes to legislation such as Welfare Reform and the introduction of the Housing and Planning Act (2016) affect Dacorum residents (see appendix 1 page 4).

- 5.2 In addition to these legislative changes, a Homelessness Reduction Bill is pending. The Bill would amend Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, to make further provision about measures for reducing homelessness.
- 5.3 The Bill aims to set out more clearly the types of housing advice and information local authorities must provide to people before they become homeless or are threatened with homelessness.
- 5.4 This new duty would apply to all eligible households irrespective of priority need and intentional homelessness. It will also outline expectation for local authorities to intervene with private landlords to prevent evictions
- 5.5 Currently a person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that they will become homeless within 28 days. The Bill proposes to extend that period to 56 days to enable local authorities to respond to the threat of homelessness at a much earlier point, and provide help such as mediation with the landlord. The Bill's second is reading scheduled for late October. Should this Bill receive Royal Assent, the proposed strategy and homelessness service would be reviewed to coincide with any new legislative requirements.
- 5.6 This adds further risk to the pressure already facing the service.
- 5.7 In response to the numerous changes impacting people across the UK the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report '*We can solve poverty in the UK*' emphasises the role of social housing providers. It highlights the complexities facing all sectors to support people in need, emphasising the importance of joined up, localised approaches. The proposed strategy seeks to embed these principles across the council and services within Dacorum.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 To conclude, if approved the proposed strategy will replace the existing Homelessness strategy 2013 – 2018. The purpose of this is to ensure the council's homelessness service maintains a clear strategic direction for preventing and tackling homelessness.
- 6.2 Through consultation with partner organisations and internal departments the new strategy includes five outcome based commitments that will be monitored by the Homelessness Forum.
- 6.3 The intention is to achieve a Gold Standard service through the NPSS whilst delivering this strategy.
- 6.4 The report provides both national and local trends for homelessness that have influenced the key groups focused on within the strategy. These include; the private sector, young people, rough sleepers and people fleeing Domestic Abuse.
- 6.5 It considers current changes in legislation such as the Welfare Reform and Housing and Planning Act 2016.
- 6.6 Additionally it outlines implications of introduction a Homelessness Reduction Bill.
- 6.7 Throughout the report the increase in demand and therefore pressures on the service have been outlined. This further supports the proposal to approve implementation of the new Homelessness strategy 2016 – 2020 and support the service to develop efficient and effective ways of meeting some of the challenges outlined

6.8 Overall it is anticipated that homelessness and the risk of homelessness will continue to grow in Dacorum.

7 Recommendations

7.1 For members to review the proposed strategy and offer further feedback ahead of presentation to Cabinet for final approval

7.2 For members to note the implications of the outlined challenges and trends impacting Dacorum's response to preventing and tackling homelessness, particularly the demands on the councils homelessness service.

7.3 For member to consider their role in monitoring the performance of the homelessness service by receiving an annual report against the five commitments set out in the strategy.



Preventing and Tackling Homelessness

Dacorum Borough Council Homelessness Strategy
2016 - 2020



Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Dacorum Borough Council's Homelessness Strategy for 2016-2020.

Homelessness has continued to increase in Dacorum and changes in legislation mean we must work in partnership to prevent and tackle homelessness.

With our commitment to achieving a gold standard service we can help to keep people in safe, secure and affordable homes.

Using the five commitments set out in the strategy we can capture the difference we as a housing service along with our partners make to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Councillor Margaret Griffiths

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5.0 Preventing and tackling homelessness

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6.0 Conclusion

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Our vision

1.0 Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council is committed to working in partnership to prevent and tackle homelessness within the borough.

This strategy sets out how we as a housing service will consider the needs of homeless households and offer assistance to those who we have a statutory duty to support under The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, Housing Act 1996, and the Homelessness Act 2002.

It will also detail the approach taken to prevent homelessness within the borough. This includes helping people to address their housing needs to avoid becoming homeless. Additionally the strategy sets out how we as a housing service will, where possible work with those people who we have no statutory obligation to support find accommodation.

This strategy explores the impact of local and national changes on homelessness in Dacorum and sets out five commitments which it will deliver in partnership.

For the purpose of this strategy a person is considered homeless if they are;

- have nowhere to stay and are on the streets
- have been evicted, illegally evicted or forced to leave their last place of residence
- have been released from prison or discharged from hospital with nowhere to go
- are at risk of losing their home within 28 days
- have a priority need for housing e.g. care leavers

2.0 Our vision

In Dacorum, preventing and tackling homelessness is more than addressing peoples housing situation. It is about helping them to fulfil their potential and live a quality life.

Our vision is to create a borough where homelessness is not an option. We will work together with our partners to help every person that is homeless or at risk of homelessness to gain the right skills and resources to improve their lives and 'get back on track'.

This strategy supports the councils corporate vision of '*...working in partnership to create a borough that enables Dacorum's communities to thrive and prosper*'.

To deliver this vision it is essential that we work with our residents to create strong and vibrant communities that enjoy safe and clean environments. We will continue to provide good quality affordable homes, particularly to those in need and ensure the economic growth and prosperity of our borough so our residents can support themselves. As a council we will explore how we can create more efficient and modern services so those who need help can access it through multiple channels.



3.0 National and local considerations

3.1 National and local impact

This strategy will take into consideration how decisions made at a national level can affect individuals living in Dacorum. We recognise that all people will at some point have experiences that could lead to homelessness. Poor life skills, relationship breakdown and the ending of a tenancy can all contribute to this. For many people, they are able to resolve these issues themselves; however it is important for us to acknowledge that not everyone has the ability to cope or the resources to support themselves through these hard times. It is these experiences that often result in individuals becoming homeless.

3.2 Welfare Reform and Universal Credit

To prevent and tackle homelessness it is important for us to understand how changes to legislation such as Welfare Reform and the introduction of the Housing and Planning Act (2016) affect Dacorum residents.

The move towards Universal Credit means people will receive benefits on a monthly basis. This will put more pressure and responsibility on individuals to manage their money and budget for the month. Receiving a lump sum can also lead to complex social issues such as financial abuse for vulnerable people and the risk to individuals with drug and alcohol dependencies. This change highlights the importance of improving people's life skills to allow them to live independently.

3.3 The Housing and Planning Act 2016

Additionally, The Housing and Planning Act 2016 marks the end of local authorities offering lifetime tenancies. Local authorities will now offer tenancies up to ten years, with some exceptions being made for families with young children and other households considered vulnerable. Alongside the benefits created for us as a council when managing our housing stock, this will require us to consider how we can support people whose tenancies are not renewed to access alternative housing and prevent them from becoming homeless.

3.4 A changing landscape

Changes in legislation can often cause the increased risk of homelessness for individuals. Based on this, the council is committed to regularly reviewing this homelessness strategy and shape services according to both local needs and national requirements.

The potential introduction of a homelessness reduction bill would see local authorities' responsibility to prevent homelessness needing to be evidenced by a formal duty, placing additional pressures on the service to meet demand.



4.0 Commitment to delivering a great service



4.1 Our commitments

To develop this strategy we worked with a variety of stakeholders including service users, the local voluntary and community sector and other statutory services.

Using trend analysis we also identified the key reasons people become homeless within Dacorum. This includes the termination of shorthold assured tenancies due to increased rents in the private sector.

From this insight into local need and the requirements of the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) ten local challenges we have developed five outcome based commitments for delivering this strategy, these are;

Commitment one: Continue to build partnerships across different sectors and lead Dacorum's response to preventing and tackling homelessness

Commitment two: Work together with partners and residents to understand the causes of homelessness and increase the help Dacorum services can offer

Commitment three: Improve access, security and stability within the private rented sector and allow Dacorum residents to remain in their homes

Commitment four: Empower Dacorum residents to make informed decisions about their housing options

Commitment five: Reduce the effect of homelessness on young people and families

4.2 Working in partnership

An increase in demand for housing and limited resources, Dacorum Borough Council is committed to working in partnership to prevent and tackle homelessness effectively.

Leading a borough wide Homelessness Forum we create the opportunity to discuss strategic issues which cross-cut all sectors with our partners. The Forum will be used to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the strategy.

Our homeless hostel 'The Elms' managed by a voluntary sector organisation allows us to adopt a No Second Night Out policy.

To effectively deliver this strategy, we will continue to maintain agreements with a variety of organisations to ensure our service can offer the highest quality advice and support to those in need. Taking an outcome based approach through the five commitments; we will monitor our performance and those of our partners to ensure by 2020, homelessness is not an option for people living in Dacorum.

4.3 Value for money

It is important that we deliver value for money for local people accessing our homelessness support services. Increased demand requires us to explore new ways to improve efficiency within our housing advice and options service so we can target resources to improve service quality, enhance effectiveness and deliver positive outcomes for our clients. We are also committed to 'demonstrating the cost effectiveness of preventing homelessness'. By investing in preventative approaches we can support people to stay in existing accommodation.

4.0 Continued

4.4 Equality and Diversity

As a Housing Service we believe everyone should have the opportunity to access our housing advice and options service regardless of; age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation (Equality and Diversity Act 2010). We are committed to being inclusive with our approach to preventing and tackling homelessness and will ensure our policies and procedures and working practices reflect this commitment. We know that groups within our population are more likely to be at risk of homelessness. Through customer insight we can trend the profiles of people within Dacorum presenting as homeless and shape the services we and our partners offer to improve this.

4.5 Setting the standard

To support the delivery of this strategy, the housing service will achieve the NPSS gold standard for homelessness. Our commitment to achieving this standard, demonstrates our desire to continuously improve and provide an excellent customer service.

Achieving this, we will; improve our response to homelessness, identify opportunities that prevent Dacorum residents from becoming homeless and work with our partners to intervene at the earliest possible point.

A gold standard homelessness service is achieved by completing the following ten local challenges;

1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services

2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice
4. To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative
5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support
6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord
7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness, reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging
9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks



5.0 Preventing and tackling homelessness



5.1 Preventing and tackling homelessness

Homelessness has been steadily increasing in Dacorum this strategy originally launched in 2014. Trends such as an increase in rough sleepers, limited affordable housing, high rents in the private sector and an increase in people seeking housing advice as a result of domestic violence demonstrate the broad demand on our current homelessness service. This increase in demand along with limited resources mean we as a housing service must find smarter solutions to meet housing needs. This strategy highlights the core themes we are committed to delivering over the next four years in order to prevent and tackle homelessness in Dacorum.

5.2 Commitment one – Continue to build partnerships across different sectors and lead Dacorum’s response to preventing and tackling homelessness

Commitment one seeks to build on the well established relationships between the housing service and the voluntary and community sector and other statutory services.

By increasing our network and developing these relationships further we can address not only peoples housing needs, but help them to improve their lives by gaining the right skills. We will explore opportunities to reduce both long-term and short-term demand on services in Dacorum. To achieve this we will;

- Increase the effectiveness of the Homelessness Forum using it effectively manage joint resources and tackle key issues to tackle homelessness
- Offer holistic support to people that are homeless or at risk of homelessness by improving pathways between services
- Review agreements between the housing service and external organisation against required outcomes and value for money achieved
- Lead a borough wide response to any national changes to ensure a consistent service
- Have a communications plan to ensure that our partners and residents are aware of our response to homelessness, which impacts on the whole community
- Utilise our travel assistance fund is used to allow reconnection of homeless clients with their local area, to prevent further demand on Dacorum’s resources and services.
- Maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness by influencing local and countywide commissioned services

5.3 Commitment two – Work together with partners and residents to understand the causes of homelessness and increase the help Dacorum services can offer

Commitment two is about understanding both the needs and the experiences of people that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Taking this informed approach we can develop preventative approaches and reduce the number of people becoming homeless in Dacorum. To achieve this we will;

- Use customer insight to map the services we offer against current and emerging need and effectively consult with customers to continue service improvement
- Develop a Housing First model to support people with complex needs experiencing homelessness into accommodation
- Eradicate rough sleeping by developing a No Second Night Out model
- Utilise our management systems and data sharing to enable us to identify potential victims of Domestic Abuse earlier and implement appropriate interventions preventing further risk or homelessness.
- Support grassroots organisations to set up initiatives that tackle the causes of homelessness within Dacorum

- Develop our Positive Futures programme to provide increased opportunities for our clients to access support and achieve independence through developed life skills

5.4 Commitment three – Improve access, security and stability within the private rented sector and help Dacorum residents to remain in their homes

Commitment three looks to improve access and security within the private rented sector for local people, increasing their housing options. This will also help to manage the demand for social housing. We will work with residents and landlords to improve stability and help residents to remain in their homes. We will achieve this by;

- Help people to stay informed by improving access to information on housing rights, new initiatives and how to access support through channel shift and signposting
- Work with private sector landlords to improve their relationships with tenant and act as a mediator to help people stay in their homes
- Develop our 'help to rent' scheme allowing people to access housing in the private sector
- Increase the support offered for mortgage repossession prevention



5.0 Continued

5.5 Commitment four – Empower Dacorum residents to make informed decisions about their housing options

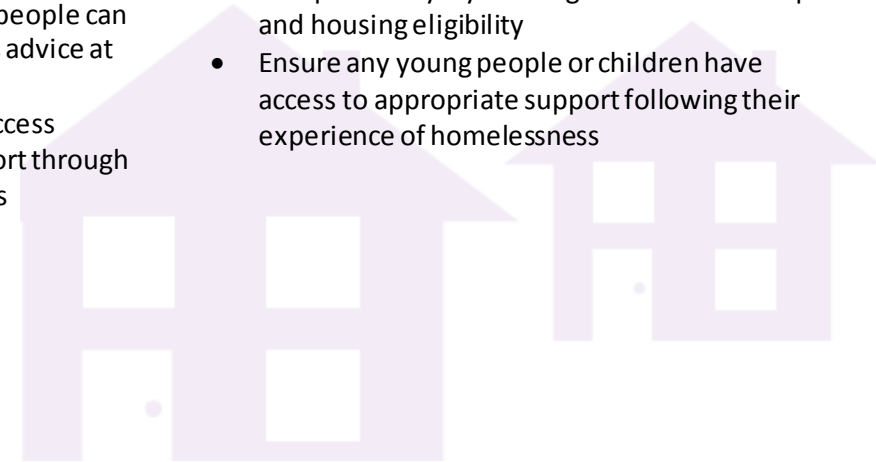
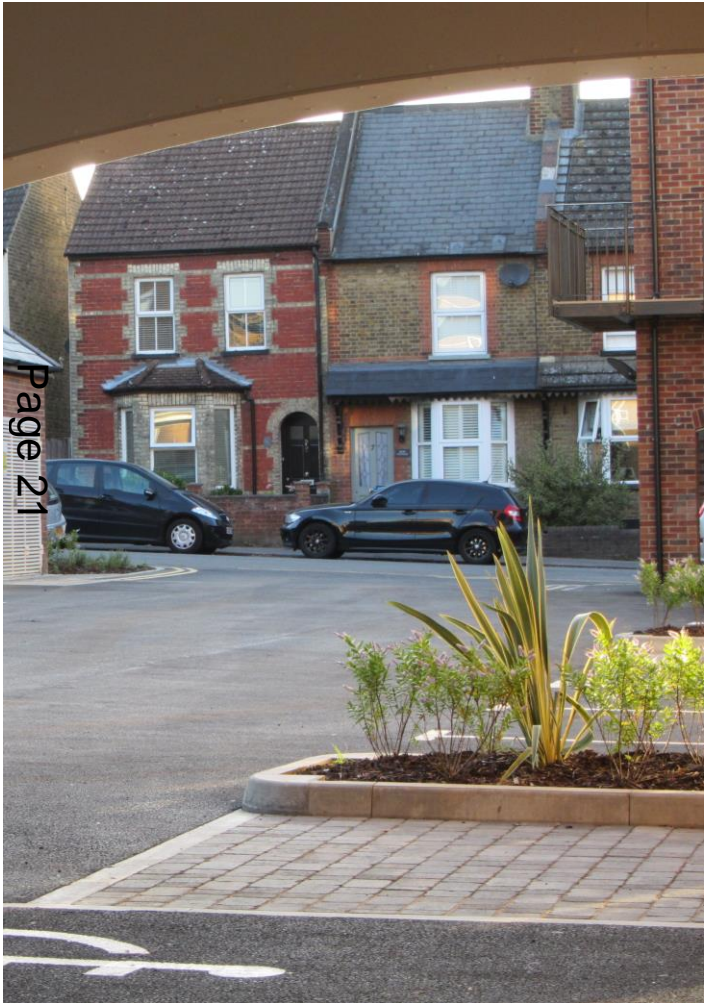
Commitment four focuses on helping people to stay informed about their housing options through high quality advice. We believe this is key to preventing homelessness. We will explore the use of channel shift so local people can access support at any given time. We will achieve this by;

- Tailor our communications so people can access information about their housing options easily
- Improve communications with residents to manage expectations for social housing
- Improve our Enhanced Housing Options toolkit and information that is available on website so people can access housing advice at all times
- Improve our contact channels so people can contact the right team and access advice at the earliest possible point
- Work with partners to increase access housing advice and options support through outreach work and pop-up events

5.6 Commitment five – Reduce the effect of homelessness on young people and families

Commitment five looks to give young people and families experiencing homelessness the best possible start. We understand that homelessness is a stressful experience for all. We will explore all opportunities to help families stay together and prevent individuals, particularly young people from becoming homeless. Through education we will support the next generation to avoid homelessness and work to reduce the effects of those who do experience it. To achieve this we will;

- Increase our offer of respite accommodation and mediation services to reduce breakdown in family relationships
- Reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people and families with young children
- Improve young people's understanding of 'living independently' by offering life skills workshops and housing eligibility
- Ensure any young people or children have access to appropriate support following their experience of homelessness



6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

Within this strategy we have set out how Dacorum Borough Council's housing service will work with strategic partnership organisations to prevent and tackle homelessness within the borough.

We are committed to considering the needs of homeless households, offering support to those who we have a statutory duty to support and working with those in non-priority homeless households.

We will take a leading role in responding with key changes in legislation and work with partners when required to coordinate a local response.

Throughout this strategy we have emphasised the importance of partnership working and will continue to keep this at the core of our service delivery.

We will consider the needs and experiences of people that are homeless or at risk of losing their home to improve our services and effectively target resources.

Improving access to the private sector and working with private landlords we will seek to reduce demand for social housing.

By empowering local people to make informed choices about their housing options we will seek to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

We will help young people and families to reduce the effect of homelessness and ensure they stay in safe and secure temporary accommodation for a limited period of time.

We believe these five commitments will support the service to achieve the NPSS gold standard.

Overall we will work towards a borough where homelessness is not an option.



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Community Impact Assessment

Name and description of project, policy or service	
Preventing and Tackling Homelessness – Dacorum Borough Council Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2020.	
To support the achievement of the NPSS gold standard service and comply with current and pending legislation, the council took the decision to replace the previous Homelessness strategy 2013 -2018 and develop a new one that considers the increasing demand for the service, potential changes in legislation and the requirements set out by the NPSS.	
Identifying the impact of this project, policy or service on the community and environment	
	<p>Questions to explore:</p> <p>What positive impact will your project, policy or service have? What negative impact will your project policy or service have? How will you ensure any negative impact is limited? What is the impact of doing nothing?</p>
On the community in general e.g. social or economic benefits, negative impacts	This strategy review is designed to reduce the impact that national changes have on our local community and to support those who are affected negatively by them.
On the council as an organisation e.g. on staff, services or assets	<p>Within this strategy, the commitment to achieving NPSS Gold Standard accreditation includes a reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people and families. This strategy also commits to actively supporting people who are at risk if homelessness before they become homeless. Both of these commitments will save money therefore having a positive impact on the council as a whole.</p> <p>By achieving the NPSS Gold Standard accreditation, the council will be able to publicly show the commitment to supporting the most in need members of the community. This public declaration will also positively impact the council.</p>
On the protected characteristics Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Specify where impacts are different for different characteristics)	This strategy makes a commitment to treating all Dacorum residents who present themselves as homeless to the council equally regardless of the protected characteristics. While the population groups most at risk of homelessness are young people, single people and males, this strategy commits to working with homeless presentations from all areas of the population to prevent and tackle the causes of homelessness.
On the environment e.g. effects on the climate, trees, amenity space, biodiversity, water, energy, waste, material use, air quality	This strategy is not likely to have any environmental impact. The staff implementing this strategy are supportive of corporate policies to minimise waste.
On the specific target community / location e.g. if the project is based in a specific area or targeted community group	This strategy sets out Dacorum Borough Council's commitments to work with strategic partners to tackle the causes of homelessness and support those members of the community who come to the council to present themselves as homeless. The strategy will positively impact these people as it sets out a commitment to support them in the most appropriate ways,

Reviewed June 2016

Community Impact Assessment

	including discharging the homeless duty into the private rented sector.	
Outline the approach you took to identify the need for this project, policy or service. Please include use of research, data and consultation with residents and/or staff.		
<p>When this strategy launched, the commitment to review it annually was made. This review has been written after consultation with Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing; Mark Gaynor – Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration; Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing; Julie Still – Group Manager Residents Services; Cynthia Hayford – Strategic Housing Team Leader; Emily-Rae Maxwell – Tenant Participation Team Leader; and Homelessness Forum partners including other local authorities and local voluntary and community sector organisations.</p>		
Which commitment(s) does this policy, project or service support from the Equality and Diversity CIH Charter Housing Framework? Link to PDF CIH Commitments on intranet		
<p>2 – Equality and diversity informs our business planning. 8 – We support the communities which we serve.</p>		
How will you review the impact, positive or negative once the project, policy or service is implemented?		
Action	By when	By who
Annual review of strategy	October 2017	Group Manager Strategic Housing
Discuss impact of strategy review at homelessness forum	October 2017	Team Leader Strategic Housing
Achieve NPSS Gold Standard accreditation	tbc	Group Manager Strategic Housing

Completed by:

Name: Niamh Turner

Role: Strategy and Communications Officer

Date: 23/09/16

Reviewed and signed off by relevant Group Manager:

Name: Natasha Brathwaite

Role: Group Manager Strategic Housing

Date: 28/09/16

Reviewed June 2016



AGENDA ITEM: 7

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	22 September 2016
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	DENS PERFORMANCE REPORT
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Natasha Brathwaite – Strategic Housing Group Manager
Purpose of report:	To update Housing & Communities OSC on the performance of the Elms contract, managed by DENS.
Recommendations	That the Housing & Communities OSC to note the report.
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	<u>Customer service</u> The aim of the contract is to improve outcomes for single homeless clients, reduce the cycle of repeat homelessness and eradicate street homelessness by working in partnership with DENS. <u>Value for money</u> The tender for the contract was awarded to DENS on the basis that they met the requirements set out from the scope of the bid and the Council's vision for the Elms. By having a more proactive partnership approach to preventing homelessness, this will help manage any impact on Council services, caused by continuing housing demands and rise in homelessness, thus reducing expenditure to meet demand, for example reducing B&B usage.
Risk Implications	All staff associated with the Elms have received essential training in line with the contract and Council staff's essential

	training. The contract is closely monitored to ensure effective performance and risks presented are considered to be low.
Equalities Implications	Legislation and guidance states that all homeless clients should be given access to information and services to assist them in resolving their own housing difficulty. The Council and DENS have formed a strong partnership through close management of the contract to ensure that the service provided is joined up and clients are provided with appropriate advice and assistance to secure accommodation. Where clients are prevented access to the Elms due to immigration or other health & safety restrictions, appropriate advice and intervention measures are taken to prevent risk and street homelessness.
Health And Safety Implications	Due to the nature of the service and transient nature of the client group, health & safety implications are present when managing such accommodation. The Council and DENS have ensured that through close monitoring and partnership working all relevant steps are taken to ensure the safety of staff and members of the public.
Consultees:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing Tracy Vause – Strategic Housing Team Leader Sean Fitzgerald – The Elms Manager
Background papers:	Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018 The Elms Contract
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

Background

1. Prior to the completion of the Elms, Dacorum Borough had 14 bed spaces of night-shelter provision available to assist single homeless clients. With single homelessness and rough sleeping increasing, in addition to growing pressures on local charitable organisations as well as the Council, there was sufficient statistical information to evidence a need for an increase in provision. The brand new modern development, The Elms, built by the Council, includes residential space, IT suite, library and a communal garden in Redbourn Road, Hemel Hempstead. The emergency temporary

accommodation has been developed through the Government's Places of Change Programme with £850,000 central government funding.

2. On the 18 December 2014 the contract for the delivery of The Elms was awarded to DENS. DENS were invited along with other charities to tender to run The Elms and needed to demonstrate expertise in a wide range of areas to convince the panel at the Council who were looking for a high quality of service provision. The charity put together a tender team which drew across the breadth of skills and knowledge within the senior management group. With their extensive experience of running the DENS Night Shelter, Day Centre, Rent Aid, Foodbank and Equipped to Change programme, DENS understand about working on the frontline to tackle homelessness and poverty by giving people the chance to build a better future.
3. The Group Manager Strategic Housing (or post of equivalent level) will be the 'Contract Manager'. The Contract Manager will monitor that the Supplier (DENS) is meeting all its obligations set out in the contract. The Council expects that DENS will ensure effective communication and cooperation with the Contract Manager. This contract will be subject to a monthly formal review meeting between the Contract Manager (or their designated staff) and DENS. As part of this role, the Contract Manager may seek to take action for underperformance or non-compliance. The Remediation Process and further details of the role of Contract Manager are further set out in the terms and conditions of the Contract. Throughout the first year, the Contract Manager has monitored DENS against their mobilisation plan and key milestones. Regular monitoring of the contract includes:
 - Regular monitoring will include:
 - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
 - Formal monthly meetings (recorded in writing) to review performance information and assess compliance with the Service Requirements;
 - Quarterly Audits;
 - Assessment of income and expenditure against DENS business plan;
 - User satisfaction; and
 - Risk management.

The Council expects that DENS will be able to supply monitoring information so that it is readily understandable and detailed in graph or pictorial form where appropriate.

The Council will also require the following information (as a minimum) to be provided at each monthly meeting, to be based on the previous Month:

- Total number of clients accommodated in the crash pad;
- Total number of clients accommodated (excluding crash pad);
- Average length of stay (excluding crash pad);
- Number of clients referred by the Council;
- Number of clients referred by other agencies;
- Number of self-referring clients;
- Number of occasions that cold weather provisions are put in place, with reasons for initiation;
- Total number of days cold weather provisions are in place;
- Number of, and reasons for, unilateral support plans;
- Number and length of exclusions;
- Number of evictions;

- Details of all evictions and exclusions;
- Numbers of rooms ready to re-let: within 24 hours; within 36 hours; over 36 hours;
- Numbers of clients receiving their initial support plan: within 24 hours; within 36 hours; over 36 hours;
- Number and type of repairs logged;
- Number and type of health and safety incidents;
- Any relevant Force Majeure Events or Relief Events;
- Number and type of incidents of conflict and behavioural management;
- Number of CCTV requests;
- Details of CCTV requests;
- Number of complaints;
- Details of all complaints and compliments;
- Client training feedback;
- Details of active partnership arrangements.

To further assess compliance with the Service Requirements the Council will also carry out quarterly audits of:

- Initial assessments and eligibility checks (including local connection);
- Support plans;
- Client feedback mechanisms;
- Site and premises.

The Council will periodically engage clients in feedback sessions to assess whether DENS is meeting their needs. The Council will also ask clients to say whether they feel they have had sufficient opportunity to be involved in providing feedback and scrutiny through DENS processes.

- DENS will also need to carry out:
- a six monthly continual improvement review,
- an Annual Performance Report, and
- an Annual Equality Impact Assessment
- and provide these to the Contract Manager when they are due.

The continual improvement review is to include:

- new or potential improvements to the Services including the quality, responsiveness, procedures and client support services in relation to the Services;
- the emergence of new and evolving relevant technologies which could improve the Services, and those technological advances potentially available to DENS and the Council which the parties may wish to adopt;
- new or potential improvements to the interfaces or integration of the Services with other services provided by third parties or the Council, which might result in efficiency or productivity gains or in reduction of operational risk; and/or
- changes in business processes and ways of working that would enable the Services to be delivered at greater benefits to clients.

Partnership working

1. To ensure successful operational management of the Elms, the Council's Operational Manager (Strategic Housing Team Leader) held weekly

operational meetings for the first 6 months of the contract; thereafter fortnightly operational meetings have been held. Meetings are formally recorded and key actions/issues brought to the attention of the Contract Manager (Group Manager, Strategic Housing). Quarterly Core Group meetings are held to ensure that the contract is appropriately implemented and monitored. These meetings are attended by the Assistant Director of Housing from the Council and the Chief Executive of DENS. To ensure effective partnership working the Council and DENS have held a number of joint training events, liaison meetings and forums, which have been held at the Elms. DENS and Council have taken part in a number of shadowing sessions to gain a better understanding of roles that play a key part in prevention of homelessness and build strong relationships. To foster the ethos of flexible working, Council staff operate a rota and co-locate several days a week at the Elms. This ensures that Elms residents are able to access advice and assistance from the Council on site and additionally frees up vital desk space at the Civic Centre.

2. DENS were a key agency involved in the Strategic Housing team's National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) peer review assessment, which had a successful outcome. The NPSS praised the standard of the accommodation and facilities available to residents and identified the strong partnership relationship that has been fostered as an area of good practice.

Challenges

DENS have had many challenges during the first year, which include:

1. Shortly after opening of the Elms DENS Hostel Manager was suspended and subsequently dismissed. DENS attempted 3 cycles of recruitment for this key role, which were unsuccessful despite many applications. The Council supported DENS closely during this difficult time and agreed a short term secondment for a Council employee to act as Interim Manager pending recruitment, this decision proved invaluable and DENS subsequently offered the officer the permanent role.
2. In addition to the Hostel Manager role, DENS have had a number of personnel changes, with their Assistant Chief Executive, Chief Executive, Facilities Manager, Equipped to Change Manager, DENS Rent Aid Manager and Senior Support Worker all leaving the organisation within 12 months of the contract commencing. The Council have worked closely with DENS to manage any impact. Whilst a partnership approach was taken to solving the staffing concerns over the first year the Council did formally write to DENS expressing concerns and reminding DENS of the contractual requirements in this area.
3. Managing external agencies expectations and ensuring appropriate referrals to the building
4. Identifying suitable successful move on accommodation in the private sector and with out organisations, to ensure that residents can move on in a planned way and not 'bed block' the accommodation.
5. In addition to operating at capacity or near-capacity since opening, DENS have an increase in the number of people using the Crash pad facility which demonstrates the severity of homelessness within Dacorum. January,

February and March saw Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) provisions activated. In February SWEP provisions ran for 14 consecutive nights which, has many challenges in terms of staffing, security and managing difficult behaviour. In the coming year the new Elms Manager has recommended extra staffing levels during SWEP.

Performance

1. DENS have quickly ensured that all staff have been able to access vital training to ensure the successful management of the Elms, this training includes HB verification training and the Council's essential training courses information security, fraud awareness, Workshops to Raise Awareness of Prevent, Domestic Abuse & Safeguarding.
2. DENS have implemented a structured timetable for their Equipped to Change project, this project as seen a number of residents undertaking and completing the Basic Skills Initial Literacy Assessment. This programme is vital to enable residents to access skills needed to regain their independence within the community and assist them in accessing, training, skills building opportunities and employment.
3. Despite a number of challenges DENS have had a successful first year and the opportunities that are open to a facility like the Elms continue to grow. By continuing to work in partnership with the Council, it is expected that the Elms will provide a 'one stop shop' for homeless clients and residents to tackle homeless in Dacorum and provide current and future residents with sustainable opportunities with access to accommodation, education, life skills employment.
4. Service charge collection is the responsibility of DENS and any debts are at DENS risk. Residents are informed on a weekly basis what they owe and issued with warning letters if they fail to contribute. After 4 weeks of non-payments residents are evicted if they cannot provide evidence to support their case for non payment. At this point many residents have abandoned their accommodation rather than repay their service charge arrears. All debts are kept on file and if a former service user re approaches for accommodation they will be expected to settle outstanding debts.

This table shows personal contributions collected, with total to date listed below.

June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
£2,048	£2,012	£2,187	£3,874	£3,727	£3,933	£2,549	£2,587	£4,058	£3,562
£2,048	£4,060	£6,247	£10,121	£13,848	£17,781	£20,330	£22,917	£26,975	£30,53

5. The Elms yearly targets and Key Performance Indicators' are listed below.

Key Performance Indicator	Aspiration service level	Expected service level	Agreed service tolerance	Critical service level
Occupancy rate	96%	90%	70 - 89%	<70%
Percentage of rooms ready-to-	100%	90%	80 - 89%	<79%

re-let within 24 hours of becoming vacant				
Arrears as percentage of income	1.5%	2.5%	2.51 - 4%	>4%
Percentage of clients successfully moved-on (defined later in this document)	95%	80%	70-79%	<69
Percentage of clients receiving an initial support plan within 24 hours	100%	90%	80 - 89%	<79%
Percentage of support plans up to date	100%	90%	80 - 89%	<79%

Occupation Rate	% rooms ready to relet within 24hrs	Licensee Arrears	% of successful move ons	% of clients receiving assessment in 24hrs	Percentage of clients receiving support plans within 5 days	% of support plans up to date
88%	87%	28%	38%	98%	82%	89%

6. The following table shows the payments that DENS will make to the Council following the tender:

Charge to DBC	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Payment to the Council annually following tender clarification	£46,691	£70,335	£71,870	£76,155	£78,896	£343,947
Payment to the Council quarterly following tender clarification	£11,672.75	£17,583.75	£17,967.50	£19,038.75	£19,724	£343,947

This payment to DBC reflects an estimate of income and expenditure based on:

- 90% occupancy
- A rent of £270 per week per resident which will be fully reimbursed by housing benefit
- A payment charge that is 4% of the received rent income from housing benefits
- The Council's payments team invoice DENS quarterly for the above charges as per the Contract
- Annual monitoring of expenditure is undertaken by the Contract Manager and DBC's Housing Accountant, to ensure that any increase in expenditure for items i.e. utilities is reflected and amended within the contract.

Planned Improvements for second year

1. The new Elms Manager is keen to focus on establishing robust move on pathways and options with multi-agencies and improving partnership relations.
2. Wendy Lewington, commences employment as the Chief Executive of DENS in September 2016. The Council will be working closely with Wendy to ensure that the partnership is sustained and to identify additional opportunities for joint working. The Council will also be seeking formal sign

up from DENS to demonstrate their continued support to preventing homelessness in Dacorum and their commitment to the Council's Homelessness Strategy.

3. Promoting the Elms as a multi-agency hub and growing the number of external agencies that use the facility, currently those agencies supporting the Elms include Supporting Herts, Druglink, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous. These agencies already hold key support sessions for residents in addition to other services provided by the Library, Specsavers and Money Advice.
4. In September a Housing Advice Surgery will commence which will be managed by the Strategic Housing Team. In the same month the Tenancy Sustainment team will also host their tenancy training sessions at the Elms.
5. There are 3 additional rooms at the Elms that were originally planned for storage, these rooms will have bathroom facilities installed to provide an additional 3 bed spaces at the facility.

Customer Feedback

1. DENS value resident's feedback and as such the residents have been encouraged to set up their on Residents meeting, which is chaired and attended by residents. Residents are given an opportunity to express their views and discuss any changes they feel would benefit them. The meetings have been well attended and some important feedback has been received including positive catering, events and course feedback.
2. The residents have a suggestion box, to obtain vital feedback on facilities, staff and opportunities for residents.